

Behind the Scenes at the Military Police Museum: Digitizing History

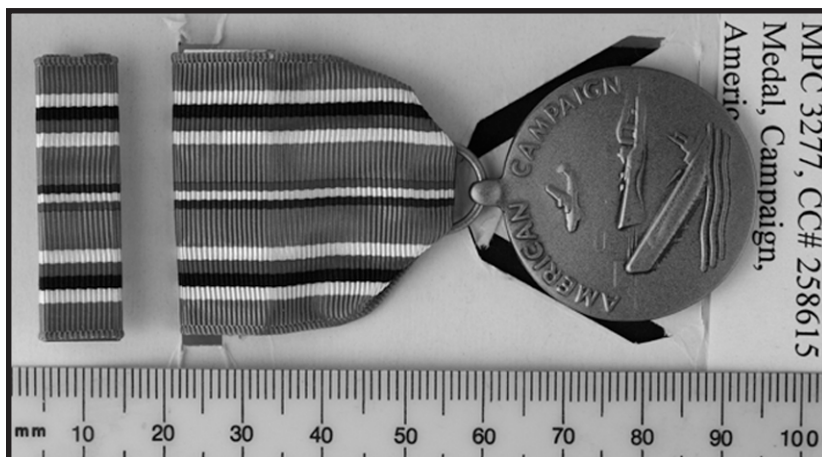
By Mr. Jim Rogers

In the past year, *Military Police* has been the beneficiary of new technology being implemented at the U.S. Army Military Police Corps Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Recent issues have featured newly digitized images of various museum artifacts and historical photos.

All Army museums are required by regulations to photographically document their artifact collections either on film or digitally. Recently, museum officials developed a “digitization plan” for military police artifacts and historic photographs, based on research into digital imaging standards established by the National Archives and Records Administration, the Library of Congress, the Getty Research Institute, the Missouri Digitization Project, and others.

As the photographic recording of artifacts has first priority, this process has been implemented at the museum using a high-resolution digital single-lens reflex camera equipped with a close-up lens. Artifacts are photographed in a studio setting with the camera mounted on a tripod or copy stand, depending on the size of the artifact. All artifacts are photographed both for simple recording and for suitability for publication, exhibit, and other venues. The recorded images are used with the museum’s artifact database, called the Universal Site Artifact Management System. Other artifact photos are being used for museum exhibits and publication. It is expected that all existing museum artifacts will be digitally photographed by early next year.

A close companion to artifact photography also covered in the museum’s digitization plan is the scanning and recording of the military police branch still photograph collections at both the museum and the historian’s office. This process is also



An artifact record photograph shows a World War II campaign medal with measurement scale and museum identification.

This artifact record photograph shows a 1974 female pantsuit, with measurement and color chart.



underway, but includes the cross-cataloging and consolidation of the museum's and historian's photos. The digitization and organization of all historic still photographs is expected to take three to five years for existing images, plus ongoing efforts for incoming new images. New historic photographs arriving at the museum may be "born digital" images recorded by a digital camera, never having been on film or print. While these will not require scanning, they will need to be cataloged and organized.

To properly preserve all of these image files during ongoing collection and cataloging, the museum staff will record the files on archival-quality compact discs or digital versatile discs, as well as on easily accessed external hard drives. Redundant copies will be made and stored at different locations, most likely at the museum and at the military police history archives. As technology evolves, so must the recorded files. The museum staff will regularly evaluate new technology and ensure that the recorded digital images are capable of migration to the next recording medium.

This digitization process will first fulfill regulatory requirements for the museum. But in the long run, this will also provide remote access to the museum and history collections as well as supporting museum exhibits and various publications, including *Military Police*.

Mr. Rogers is the director of the U.S. Army Military Police Corps Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He began his museum career as an exhibit designer with the Ohio Historical Society in 1977. He has been director of the Motorcycle Heritage Museum in central Ohio and was previously the director of the Fort Bliss Museum in El Paso, Texas.

This historical photo is an original Signal Corps photo with information attached to the print border. The seal in the lower left corner denotes an official U.S. Army Signal Corps photo and the number at the bottom right is a Signal Corps negative tracking number.

